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Congress has tough answers to stopping terrorists' activities

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Members of Congress are praising President Reagan's handling of the hostage crisis, while suggesting a range of responses to the incident from closing Beirut airport by force to "targeted retaliation" against the terrorists.

Longer-range responses proposed include new investments in U.S. intelligence, increased security, new international accords against terrorists and legal prosecution of terrorists in their own countries.

Late yesterday, the White House said the two weekly flights between the United States and Beirut would be canceled, and asked other nations to cancel service to Beirut — which they actually did years ago — as part of a voluntary, international sanction.

"The airport must be closed either by international agreement or by military means," said Rep. William Broomfield, R-Mich., senior Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"I agree with Secretary of State [George P.] Shultz that Beirut is a city without law and order, and Beirut airport has become a haven for international terrorists," he added, in reference to comments made by the Mr. Shultz on Sunday after the hostages had been released.

At that White House press conference, Mr. Shultz said, "It's not a question of sort of economic sanctions or something like that. It's a question of trying to close the usefulness of that airport."

Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., said he supports "targeted use of American force" against terrorists, while Sen. Gordon Humphrey, R-N.H., said the United States is going to have to get tough with terrorists and start "rubbing out some people."

"I think we are going to have to get very much involved in undercover operations to infiltrate these terrorist organizations, not just in the Middle East, but everywhere," Sen. Humphrey said.

"Frankly, we're going to have to get involved in rubbing out some people. You have to take off the gloves and deal with this kind of scum in their own terms eventually or face more and more hijackings," he said.

Sen. Hart also called for upgrading U.S. intelligence capabilities to improve the chances for success in rescue operations in future hostage incidents.

"However, when terrorists violate international law by abducting and murdering innocent Americans, the targeted use of American force, aimed carefully against those directly responsible, is fully appropriate," he said in a statement from Geneva.

"The president must determine how our nation will respond to this latest round of terrorism," Sen. Hart said.

"This can only be done if we significantly upgrade our intelligence capabilities. Rather than mining Nicaraguan harbors, this administration should use its resources to infiltrate terrorist groups and develop information sources about their activities," he said.

Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, contended that "we should never rule out retaliation when we can identify guilty terrorist groups."

"We Americans must realize that we are at war with terrorism. To fight it, we must have better intelligence, require safer airports and provide protection on overseas flights," Rep. Skelton said.

Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, said the United States should pursue a policy involving "increased intelligence, better security, multinational sanctions and, to any country with which we maintain normal relations, agreeing to apprehend and prosecute terrorists, not coddle them."

Rep. James Courter, R-N.J., a member of the Armed Services Committee, said the United States

should move against the gunmen who beat and murdered Navy Petty Officer Robert Stethem now that the 39 other hijack victims are free.

"A robber who murders a bank teller and later surrenders the money he stole, still has jail time to do," Rep. Courter said.

"Appropriate Shi'ite and Lebanese officials should be called upon to bring the original two gunmen to trial, at the least. If they refuse, as is likely, the administration must consider its other options," he added.

The president's national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, said, "I think ... what has emerged from this experience in the United States has been a very widespread, popular support for more firmness in dealing with terrorism." He said that until now, such sentiment "has been missing."

Beyond that, Mr. McFarlane said the hostage ordeal would translate into support for "additional authority from the Congress — a new law — to enable us to better deal with this problem, and that is a benefit of this, as tragic as it has been." He did not elaborate.

Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., the senior Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said, "I also congratulate the administration for its handling of this matter."

"The war against terrorism is not over, and we must give top priority to measures such as improving airport security to minimize the possibility of another hijacking," he said in a statement released by his Washington office. The senator is in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said his panel already has underway a full review of U.S. intelligence agencies' ability to deal with terrorism.

Chairman David Durenberger, R-Minn., said his panel "is currently conducting a full review of the role of U.S. intelligence agencies in identifying and monitoring suspected terrorists."

"As happy and relieved as we are today, we have to remember that we are likely to see more of these abhorrent terrorist acts in a continuing holy war against Americans and others," Sen. Durenberger said.

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